

Objective

Students will be able to identify six different cloud types and their characteristics.

Materials

Pillows to represent cumulus clouds

Gray sheet to represent stratus clouds

Gray tulle to represent fog

Pillow stuffing to represent cirrus clouds

Sheet with polka dots to represent nimbostratus clouds

Pictures

Do You Know That Clouds Have Names? Book

Cloudscape Materials

- Cotton balls
- Waxed paper
- Pillow stuffing
- Glue
- Markers (or other item for labeling)
- Blue paper
- White paper
- Fog scene background

Prepare:

Write “Low” “Medium” and “High” on the board.

Procedure

1. Start by asking children to share something they know about clouds.
2. Tell children they are going to learn the different types of clouds. Remind them that all clouds are made of water and clouds are one way for water to move around the earth. There are 12 different kinds of clouds but today they will learn five of them. Scientists classify clouds (or put them into groups) by how high they are in the sky and by their shapes. Even though all clouds look very high to us, when you look down from space some are higher than others.
3. Call up four children. Hand them the pillows. Explain that they are cumulous clouds. Show pictures of cumulous clouds from the book. Cumulus clouds are low, puffy and look like pillows. They are spread out in the sky and associated with good weather. Have the children hold the pillows low and have them move around the room. Point out that the cumulus clouds are widely spaced so people on the ground would see blue sky. Write cumulous on the board next to low with descriptive words. (See page 4 for example)

4. Call up several more children. Give them the gray sheet. Explain that they are stratus clouds. Show them pictures of stratus clouds from the book. Stratus clouds are also low in the sky. Stratus clouds are gray and cover the whole sky. They look flat or like they are in layers. When stratus clouds cover the sky, we usually talk about what a cloudy day it is as we can't see the sun. Write stratus with descriptive words on the board.
5. Have the children set the gray sheet down and sit on it. Cover them up with the gray tulle. Explain that this is fog. Fog is a stratus cloud that touches the ground. Show pictures of fog from the book. Point out that children seem hazy and are not easy to see clearly. In the same way, fog makes it hard to see clearly. Write fog on the board below cumulus and stratus.
6. Call up the next children. Give each a piece of pillow stuffing. Have them stretch it out thinly and hold it way over their heads. Explain that they are cirrus clouds. Cirrus clouds are the highest clouds and are thin and wispy. We usually see cirrus clouds only in the autumn and winter when the weather gets colder. Some people call cirrus clouds mare's tail. Write cirrus with descriptions on the board next to high.
7. The final clouds are nimbus clouds. Whenever you hear nimbus or nimbo in a cloud name, you know it means precipitation.

Call up more children and have them hold the sheet with the dots that represent precipitation. Allow them to gently shake the sheet. Nimbostratus is the kind of cloud that brings rain or snow. Nimbostratus clouds are darker than regular stratus clouds. In the summer when there is a big storm there clouds can be very dark gray. Nimbostratus clouds are also low. Show nimbostratus cloud pictures from the book. Write nimbostratus on the board near low.

Cumulonimbus clouds are the type of clouds you see before a thunderstorm. Cumulonimbus clouds start low and go high into the sky. Stack pillows to show the height. Show cumulonimbus clouds from the book. Draw and label a cumulonimbus cloud on the board, showing how it starts low and goes high.

8. Explain that they are going to make a cloudscape to show the different types of clouds. Break the children into six groups. Each group will make a type of cloud. (Each child in the group can make their own cloud). Pass out the examples.
9. Stratus
Blue paper, waxed paper. Tear waxed paper into strips and glue to top.

Fog

Waxed paper, landscape scene. Label paper before gluing. Crumple wax paper. Glue to sheet.

Cumulous

Blue paper, cotton balls. Glue cotton balls on sheet in puffs.

Cirrus

Blue paper, pillow stuffing. Spread out stuffing. Glue to sheet.

Nimbostratus

Blue paper, black card stock strip. Glue card stock to top of paper. Draw in raindrops.

Cumulonimbus

Blue paper, cotton balls, black marker (save till cotton balls are applied). Glue cotton balls in anvil shape to paper. Color with black marker on the base.

10. Wrap up by having students bring their clouds to the front of the room and show whether they are high, medium, or low. (Note: we did not study medium clouds in this lesson.)
11. Children can hang their work on a wall at the appropriate level to remind them of the different types of clouds.

High

Cirrus

- white
- thin, wispy
- looks like horse's tail
- seen in autumn or winter

Medium

Low

Cumulus

- white
- puffy
- patchy
- nice weather

Stratus

- gray
- covers whole sky
- flat, layers
- cloudy day

Nimbostratus

- rain or snow
- covers whole sky

Cumulonimbus

- thunderstorm
- starts low, goes high

Sample of board work: Clouds

